

From Vaughn Lovejoy
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To Whom It May Concern Within Utah's Division of Oil, Gas and Mining
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I would like to speak to you as a father and grandfather on behalf of not only my children and grandchildren but all of our children and grandchildren. When I was in college in the early 1970's in a Technology and Society Class we were required to read the Limits To Growth published in 1972 by the prestigious Club of Rome. Its message was *"If the present growth trends in world population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next one hundred years. The most probable result will be a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity"*

As a service learning teaching partner at the University of Utah as part of my responsibilities with TreeUtah throughout the most of the 1990's we had our students read the Union of Concerned Scientist's 1992 World Scientist's Warning To Humanity. It was written by 1,700 of the world's leading scientists, including the majority of Nobel laureates in the sciences. Their appeal began: *"Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course. Human activities inflict harsh and often irreversible damage on the environment and on critical resources. If not checked, many of our current practices put at serious risk the future that we wish for human society and the plant and animal kingdoms, and may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner that we know. Fundamental changes are urgent if we are to avoid the collision our present course will bring about."*

One can also add to these publications the ongoing reports from the IPCC, Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change whose report last year clearly stated: *"Human influence on the climate system is clear, and recent anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases are the highest in history,... The atmospheric concentration of key greenhouse gases — carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide — is "unprecedented in at least the last 800,000 years," the report warns, and our fossil-fuel driven economies and ever-increasing population are to blame.*

Pope Francis released earlier this month his much anticipated Encyclical Letter, Laudato Si': On Care For Our Common Home, which stated: *"A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system ... There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy."*

As I read these documents and then pay attention to the news media it seems to me we are playing a very high-stake poker game with our children and grandchildren's future. It reminds me of Pascal's Wager many of us may have learned about this if we took a philosophy classes in college. Pascal's Wager is an argument devised by the seventeenth-century French philosopher, mathematician and physicist Blaise Pascal (1623–62). It posits that humans all bet with their lives either that God exists or not. Given the possibility that God actually does exist and assuming an infinite gain or loss associated with belief or unbelief in said God (as represented by an eternity in heaven or hell), a rational person should live as though God exists and seek to believe in God. If God does not actually exist, such a person will have

only a finite loss (some pleasures, luxury, etc.)

There appears to be an ongoing debate about whether we should "believe in human caused climate change" Just for the sake of argument lets say we do not know for sure but lets at least allow for the possibility that the scientific community may be right about this. If they are and the consequences that their computer models and very best understanding show are very dire for our children's and grandchildren's future. As caring, loving, compassionate and just plain prudent human beings isn't it clear that we should face the challenges of creating a alternative sustainable energy based economy for their sake? Yes, there may be short term sacrifices and challenges but these would be minimal compared to the potential consequences of continuing with the business as usual model if the scientific community is correct.

Pope Francis in his encyclical makes a case for how serious our dilemma is:
"Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth. The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world. The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now. We need to reflect on our accountability before those who will have to endure the dire consequences."

As professionals working for the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining you have as part of your mission to: "maintain(s) sound, regulatory oversight to ensure environmentally acceptable activities." I am asking you as a father and grandfather to invoke this part of your mission and turn down this request to expand the PR Spring Tar Sands Mine. This last weekend I visited the PR Spring Tar Sands Mine. The mining activities which have already occurred at this site have been immensely destructive to this extraordinary landscape and the home of many beautiful species of fauna and flora.

I ask you from the bottom of my heart to not only use your professional capacity "to ensure environmentally acceptable activities" but to seriously *"reflect on [y]our accountability before those who will have to endure the dire consequences."* Before you make this decision, please go home and look into the eyes of your children. Is continuing to support such questionable fossil fuel projects really worth risking the future of those beautiful souls which have been entrusted to you?

Sincerely,

Vaughn Lovejoy

Vaughn Lovejoy

Cofounder of TreeUtah

And Project Coordinator from 1990 to 2011